

# THE SERAPH

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# The Seraph

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*In essentia - Unitas. In dubio - Libertas.  
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**THE SERAPH**

# THE NECESSITY OF PENANCE

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*Bishop Giles Butler, OFM DD*

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The Season of Lent is fast approaching, and it is time for us to reflect on the necessity of penance. It is easy to become distracted by the negative aspects of penance. It is most disagreeable to our fallen nature. The allure of bodily leisure or idleness is being constantly whispered in our ears by the devils, the world, and our fallen nature. Our fallen natures and weakened wills imagine Paradise as a place of physical idleness and indulgences.

Since the moment of our Baptism, we must resist these constant temptations that we have renounced. We have renounced Satan and all his works, and have professed, promised, vowed our allegiance to Jesus Christ. We are His disciples, and we will have to give an account of these promises in eternity.

Jesus indeed came to Sacrifice Himself to open the gates of Heaven for us. However, we must not forget that He also came to show us the way to find the gate of Heaven and pass through it. If we are to rise with Him and enter Heav-

en with Him, we must be faithful followers or disciples of Him. To be His disciples, we must do what He has told us. "If you wish to be My disciples, you must deny yourselves and take up your cross daily and follow Me."

Every day of our lives, we have a cross. It is usually not a cross of our own choosing, but one that has been personally given to us by God. In this world, we cannot escape crosses, but we can choose how we deal with our daily crosses. We can resent them, complain about them, and refuse them to a limited degree, but this will only make them heavier, more bitter, and more painful. Or we can willingly embrace our daily crosses for the love of Jesus, in imitation of Jesus, and find that our crosses then become light, sweet, and a joy. Our attitudes and intentions are the only things that determine our success or failure.

Please understand. There are some in this world who hate and detest their crosses in this life and seem to succeed materially. Their wishes, desires,

and goals are obtained, and in this light, it appears that they have succeeded. However, upon closer examination, their success in this world was bought at the cost of eternal success. They bear their crosses because they cannot escape them, but they never learn to love, embrace, or benefit from them, missing the hope and promise that comes with trusting God's plan.

While we see very little worldly good in willingly embracing our crosses, faith teaches us that there are eternal rewards to be obtained. We can't escape our daily crosses. If we try to run from one cross, we only find another, perhaps a heavier or harder one than the one before us. To make the best of these crosses that we cannot escape, it is simply a matter of attitude or intention.

How did Jesus carry His cross? He did so willingly for the love of us. He did this not only to satisfy for our sins, but also to give us the example for us to follow Him. Do we love Jesus enough to deny ourselves and follow Him?

We must labor for the Kingdom of Heaven if we wish to enter it. Jesus gave us the parable of the laborers in the vineyard as an example. Not everyone had the same cross

or burden of the day's labor or heat, but all received the same payment of the daily wage. Only those who labored received the reward. Only those who deny themselves and take up their daily crosses following Jesus will receive the reward of being His disciples and entering His Kingdom.

A typical temptation is to compare our cross with another's. This is a mistake because we have no means of knowing or measuring graces, merits, burdens, sins, or culpability – not of ourselves, and certainly not that of others. If we look upon the crosses that others have, let it be so that we may seek ways to help them or share their burden and make it lighter for them, as Jesus has done for us. Never should we strive to make their crosses heavier or more burdensome, much less try to shift the weight of our own crosses onto them. Each of us has a cross designed by God specifically for us. No one else's cross will fit us like the one that God has created just for us. No one else's cross will help us or cure us like the one that God has created and given to us.

I see our daily cross as our spiritual medicine, a gift from God. It may appear disagreeable, but when we accept this bitter medicine, we are healed.

Physical medicine heals our bodies. The spiritual medicine of our daily cross will heal our souls. With maturity, we learn to love and even seek out the bitter medicine that we need to heal our bodies. With spiritual maturity, we learn to love and even seek out the bitter medicine of the cross to heal our souls. This spiritual maturity is what we need to cultivate as we prepare for and enter this Lenten Season.

Yes, we look forward to the joys of the Resurrection and the promise of our future resurrection; nonetheless, we must maturely consider the means of obtaining that joy. It

is a gift of God, but only those who follow Jesus willingly and lovingly in this life are allowed to enter in with Him and receive His eternal glory.

It is good for us to accept the Lenten penances asked of us by God; however, spiritual maturity enables us to willingly and lovingly seek out these penances. With growth in faith, we learn to see them as vital medicine for our souls, helping us deepen our union with Jesus and prepare for the joy of the Resurrection.



“APART FROM THE CROSS, THERE IS NO OTHER LADDER BY WHICH WE MAY GO TO HEAVEN.”

ST. ROSE OF LIMA



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# THE SLOW DESCENT

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*Bishop Giles Butler, OFM DD*

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Our fallen human nature tends to follow the path of least resistance. Once important things become indifferent, they ultimately become irrelevant. The worldly or demonic temptations that lead us away from prayers and devotions to God always appear to take this same course.

One generation may be faithful in praying a daily family rosary, but the next generation becomes indifferent. Sometimes they say it together, but most often it becomes a private devotion. The following generation then becomes completely indifferent to praying the rosary at all. By the time we reach the fourth generation, there is scarcely any prayer or even faith left.

Attendance at Holy Mass seems to follow this same progression. One generation is faithful and always present at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass on all Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation. The next generation becomes less

frequent, though they always seem to have a good excuse. The following generation is lucky if they make it to Mass once or twice a year. They are the Christmas and Easter Catholics. Finally, the succeeding generations lose all faith in God. But our active effort can help reverse this trend and renew our devotion.

The devil leads us along the same path of gradualism when we sin. Our great-grandparents would be appalled by the sinful attitudes of our society today. How did we come to the point when we are no longer shocked by the mention of someone murdering their unborn child!? Why are we no longer surprised by people who divorce and remarry? Or by cohabitating, unmarried couples? Why are there people who can openly and boldly promote Satanism? The sinful and perverted ways of life that were once shocking or scandalous have become normal or acceptable.

This is not something new, but has been with us since the fall of Adam. God “renderest the

iniquity of the fathers to the children, and to the grandchildren unto the third and fourth generation” (Exodus 34:7). This should remind us of our moral duty to resist this tide of corruption and seek God's grace through self-denial and embracing our daily crosses.

It often seems that the sins of our ancestors do not cause them much, if any, inconvenience in this world, which tempts us to think that it was okay or not all that serious. From these ideas, we conclude that it is OK and perhaps even good for us to imitate them and possibly push the boundaries even farther than they did. We can see this in the clothing fashions throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first century. Modesty in fashion gives way to the ever-increasing risqué. What was once risqué becomes the norm as the previous boundaries are pushed further and become the new risqué.

Our entertainment, in all its forms, displays this, but we especially see it in audio and video (music and movies or shows). The continual slide deeper into the evils of sin becomes more evident as we look back on our history with

honesty and objectivity. It is not only in modesty and sexuality, but also in faith and morals. The blatant abuse of the Name of God in audio and video “entertainment” is no longer censored; it no longer shocks the sensibilities of most people. It is true hypocrisy to feign shock at racial, sexual, or cultural slurs against our fellow men, but to be unfazed by the insult to God and His Laws.

We push to allow children with gender dysphoria to choose their “sexual identities” and to obtain life-altering surgeries and hormone inhibitors or cross sex hormone supplementation, etc. Still, we feign shock that children may acquire a tattoo without parental consent. Children obtain birth control and even abortions without parental consent, yet we pretend to protect them by not allowing them to buy tobacco or alcohol.

The sexual revolution in the 1960s gave way to legalized abortions, legalized divorce, single parents, and an almost incalculable number of evils and perversions that only a few saw coming.

While social evils were developing in their logical course, each generation

pushing societal boundaries further than their parents', there was a concurrent decline in morals and religion. The "Vatican II" Council ushered in change to make things easier and more appealing to humanity's fallen nature. From a God-centered Church, they formed a man-centered church. The altar of Sacrifice to God was replaced with a table for a meal for humanity. The service of humanity replaced the worship of God. The Sacrificing priesthood dedicated to serving God was replaced with the "priesthood of the faithful." The practice of humility and modesty was replaced by that of pride and vanity.

"Vatican II" rendered the dedicated lives of clergy and religious obsolete, outdated, unnecessary, and even a waste of human life and potential. That is why there was a mass emigration from convents, rectories, and seminaries. The vows of celibacy were abandoned; religious life and dedication gave way to the pursuit of secular pleasures and goals. The sacredness of marriage was also lost as increasingly frequent annulments became nothing more than "Catholic" divorces. In an effort to become more appealing or relevant to

humanity, "Vatican II" established a church and religion that was even more offensive to God.

However, the changes of "Vatican II" were gradual. Things became optional until they no longer existed. Kneeling to receive Communion became optional, then became no longer socially acceptable. Kneeling became a sign of singularity opposed to conformity. An act of humility before God became an insult to our fellow men.

Belief in the Real Presence was not openly made optional, but it was so in practice. Anyone and everyone was invited to receive the "Communion wafer" regardless of belief or state of their souls. It became a sign of communion with one another rather than true union with God. Tabernacles were moved out of the way rather than remaining central to the Altar and the Church. God was set aside to make way for humanity, just as the altar of Sacrifice to God was replaced with a table to serve humanity. Communion wafers were soon placed in the unconsecrated hands of laity rather than remain in the consecrated hands of priests.

It seems that all that the Council of Trent condemned concerning heretical Protestantism was welcomed and embraced by the new church of "Vatican II." This happened gradually and almost imperceptibly to the majority of people involved. The Protestant denial of the Real Presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist was not openly commanded but was tolerated until it became the norm. The practice of standing to receive Holy Communion was experimented with until it became the norm. Communion in the hand was introduced as a more hygienic practice because it is difficult for the priest to place the wafer on people's tongues when they are standing. These practices or developments gradually eroded the True Faith.

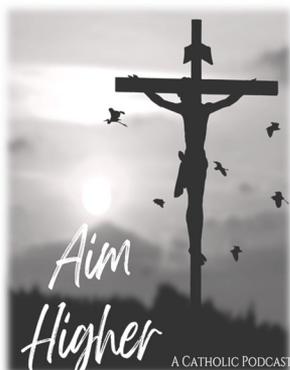
While the "Vatican II" church is not the Faith of our Catholic ancestors, it is the faith of our pagan ancestors. It is the logical falling of humanity further and further from God and grace. While we do inherit our weakened natures and are more inclined to greater social, ethical, moral, and religious degradation, Jesus offers us the means to overcome these tendencies. We must begin with true love of God, which inspires us to seek greater

knowledge and understanding of the One True God. This, in turn, encourages us to seek and obtain true faith, direction, and guidance in the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic faith that Jesus gave us. These, in turn, inspire us to greater love. This cycle is meant to be ever-increasing as we live out our lives here in this world. We must strive for greater awareness and hatred of the offences of sin and evil as we grow in grace and love. All of this is a continual and gradual growth, not downward but upward, and it is made possible only in those who will daily deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Jesus.

May we offer our children an edifying example of loving and cooperating with God and His True Church, so that they may be inspired to labor constantly to rise higher, rather than be swept away by the gradualistic demonic current into Hell.



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# PRO PARENTIBUS

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*Father Joseph Noonan, OFM*

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## THE TEST OF LOVE

Men and women are married each day somewhere in the world. This has been happening for thousands of years in all cultures and countries of the world. There is nothing new here. It is understood that men and women marry because they love each other. If there are any other selfish motives, then it is likely the marriage will suffer or fail.

It is hoped that Catholic couples preparing for marriage approach the holy Sacrament in a manner that is pleasing to Almighty God. It is to be understood that God and the Catholic Faith come first. There can be no compromise when it comes to marriage.

The first test in marriage is the same as it is in life. How much do you love God? Let this love inspire you to follow the Church's laws for the wedding and embrace the sacrifices that deepen your spiritual bond.

Then there is the question of how to properly raise a child. Are you committed to educating your child in the Catholic Faith? How willing are you to make the necessary sacrifices

to give them the best Catholic education? Do you understand what it means to be an example of supernatural virtue to your child?

How many parents have the desire and goal of raising their child to be a saint? This is perhaps the most important accomplishment of a parent. It must be noted that one has seen very little of this among Catholic parents. Unfortunately, one must say this, but mediocrity will not make it possible to gain eternal salvation.

One's love is tested during those days when you are busy raising a child, the father is working full-time, the mother is at home taking care of the children, and busily keeping the house in order.

It is during those days when the "marital honeymoon" would seem to bring one down to earth to a more realistic world where one is called upon to work out one's salvation through prayer and penance.

A true supernatural love will provide motivation to carry out one's duties and responsibilities each day and during the most difficult times

of one's life. This is the difference between making use of the grace which God provides and rejecting any supernatural help to further one's means of sanctification, especially in the married state.

So many marital problems arise because the desire to marry a specific person was not what it should have been. Perhaps it was lust and not love. Maybe it was wealth and not love. Perhaps it was societal status and not love. Unless there is a spiritual conversion and awakening, this marriage will be very difficult, to say the least.

One of the most important things to do each day is to ask God for the grace to bless the marriage and family. One suspects this is the cause of unnecessary troubles within married life. Both spouses should begin to pray for a happy and holy marriage before they marry. This should continue on the day of the wedding and throughout married life. Only in this way will a couple have the greatest possible assurance of God's blessings. This, indeed, is a test of how much one loves God.

The necessity of praying with a child each day cannot be overstated. If a child is taught to pray and to love praying, the

probability of his continuing to pray throughout his adult life greatly increases. When a child sees a parent praying, it will generally leave a lasting impression. If parents pray little or not at all, more than likely a child will not pray. Unless a spiritual conversion takes place later in life, a child will quite likely leave the Church.

This necessary example is further evident in the reception of the Sacraments. When a child witnesses his parents receiving the Sacraments, this goes a long way toward encouraging him to receive them regularly, if not weekly. This writer has witnessed too many children who received their First Holy Communion at a young age, only to see tragic neglect on the part of parents. The result is that the older the child becomes, the less likely he is to receive the Sacraments, and the more likely he is to leave the Church.

This underscores the importance of grace in the child's daily life. It has a direct effect on the child, his behavior, his decisions, and often on who he becomes. I believe Catholic parents do not understand this critical point of the Faith, looking at the life of the child through a natural lens rather than a supernatural one.

There is nothing worse than a Catholic parent having a child baptized only to neglect the necessary guidance and example concerning the other Sacraments. The spiritual tragedy cannot be overstated because when one understands that a child is given to parents for a little while with the responsibility of raising them according to His Holy Will, and they neglect this sacred duty, too often they are the cause of that child going to Hell. One is again reminded of the ongoing test of love of God, which supersedes all other forms of love.

The questions of discipline and modesty are always present in the family environment. Some parents are attentive and responsible in these areas; others are not. These questions are a part of the bigger picture of forming a child to understand that they are a temple of the Holy Ghost. The parents must instruct a child in how he or she must carry themselves in this world. There is a certain decorum by which a Catholic ought to carry himself (herself). This necessarily separates a Catholic adult from others who are not. This can easily be seen with a bit of observation.

Although a child wants to be like other children, he (she) must be taught that there are

going to be differences that are a part of being Catholic. This does not mean one looks down on non-Catholics. One should also understand that Catholics are not better than others. This sin of pride will bring you down faster than you realize.

Catholics do have the advantage of more readily accessing grace than others. A baptized Catholic is a member of the One True Church. The Sacraments are available only to Catholics. The prayer life of a Catholic ought to be more structured than that of others. These are points that parents ought to teach their children at an appropriate age.

The test of love of God and the family is at the core of why one marries and is willing to sacrifice him (her) self. If sacrifice is not a part of the daily life of a Catholic parent, their life will be miserable because of their selfishness.

As a parent, you may free yourself from the bonds of selfishness through a true supernatural love of God and a correct attitude of selflessness. Pray each day for this grace with the desire to love God more and more each day.

# IS GOD CALLING YOU?

*“Be not conformed to this world; but be reformed in the newness of your mind, that you may prove what is the good, and the acceptable, and the perfect will of God.”*

*Romans 12:2*

*Do you love serving God and neighbor?*

*Do you find yourself increasingly unsatisfied by the life of the world?*

*Do you yearn for something more?*

*Not all of us are meant for marriage or a life in the world. Some souls are set aside by God for special tasks. These are the souls that find joy and contentment in the religious life or sacred priesthood.*

*Do not be deterred by what you think you know or by what the world tells you. Find out for yourself. If you feel called, then at least learn more.*

*Any happiness we may have on earth and all the joy we hope for in heaven depend on answering God’s individual call for us. The sooner we do His Will, the happier we will be.*



# A LENTEN MEDITATION: ENTERING INTO THE DESERT

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*Father Anthony Lentz, OFM*

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During the first three centuries of the Church's existence, She suffered persecutions. Many of the various tortures inflicted upon Her children would make anyone cringe in fear. This is understandable because pain and suffering are things from which we normally run away from due to the instinct of self-preservation. This is why God gave a strong supernatural grace to help aid the Christian Martyrs during their final struggle. The combined effect of all three theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity gave them the strength to willingly give up this mortal life and enter into eternity with the confidence that they are entering into eternal life with God in Heaven. The persecutions officially ended in the year 313 with the Edict of Milan, but the desire to leave the world to be more closely united with God remained. Men and women flocked to the deserts of Egypt to retire from the world and live a secluded life of work and prayer. They sought to not only embrace the Commandments of God and His Holy Church, but they also

sought to embrace the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Entering into the desert to get away from the world was not a novelty but rather an imitation of Our Lord's ascetic life.

The Gospel for the First Sunday of Lent tells how Our Lord first went into the desert at the beginning of His Sacred Ministry.

*"Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert, to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward, He was hungry. And the tempter coming said to him: If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. Who answered and said: It is written, Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, and set Him upon the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him: If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down, for it is written: 'That He hath given His angels charge over Thee, and in their hands shall they bear*

*Thee up, lest perhaps Thou dash Thy foot against a stone.’ Jesus said to him: It is written again: ‘Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.’ Again the devil took Him up into a very high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and said to Him: All these will I give Thee, if falling down Thou wilt adore me. Then Jesus saith to him: Begone, Satan: for it is written: The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil left Him; and behold angels came and ministered to Him.” (Gospel of St. Matthew 4: 1-11)*

Throughout the Gospels, we find that Our Lord would leave His Apostles and other disciples to go into the mountains and the deserts to pray. He needed time alone to be with His Father, and so doing, He gave us the example of a true ascetic vocation. God called some to go to the actual desert – St. Anthony of Egypt, St. Paul the Hermit, St. Catherine of Alexandria, etc. Others God called later to establish a religious community or enter the priestly or monastic life – St. Benedict, St. Pachomius, St. Augustine of Hippo, etc. These took oaths to observe the evangelical counsels. Monasticism in the West grew, and even though these men were clois-

tered, they still impacted society and Church reform. The greatest and most influential example of this was the Benedictine Monks of Cluny in the 10th and 11th centuries. Besides these obvious examples, another group still cannot enter an actual desert to become a hermit, nor do they have a vocation to become a monk or nun. This group is the laity, that is, most of the Catholic population.

God has called most people to remain living in the world to have a positive supernatural impact upon society. God called most to the vocation of parenthood, a noble calling. Parents have the duty to make sure that their children learn the faith, with love and devotion, and to populate Heaven for God’s greater glory. They are especially called to continue living in the world but not be a part of this world. When the lay Catholic starts to be worn down by the world, it is time to retreat into the desert, that is, the desert of solitude.

The Season of Lent is the most appropriate time to do this. The Church does not command us to fast, abstain, avoid parties and other festivities during Lent to annoy; She does so to inspire us. She desires to encourage a detachment from worldly things and

distractions, to have the tools and resolutions necessary to grow in holiness.

Solitude removes worldly distractions and takes the necessary time out of your day to speak to God in mental prayer. Solitude is also taking the right amount of time for spiritual reading. This is a spiritual super-recharge for the battery of your soul. So, when I am talking about prayer and spiritual reading, I am not talking about those things you already do. I am talking about those things you could do for God. To limit yourself to a mere recitation of your morning offering, Angelus, and night prayer is not entering the desert. You are merely at the threshold. You have to want to do more! It would be best if you looked forward to leaving the world behind and meditating on the truths of the Faith. Open up your Catechism and read a lesson! Then take ten or fifteen minutes thinking about what you read and apply its lessons into your own life and conduct. Whenever those worldly thoughts try to distract you throughout your day, put them out of your mind by saying a quick ejaculation, such as, "Lord Jesus crucified, have mercy on me."

Another practice that may prove helpful, especially dur-

ing Lent, is taking the Stations of the Cross booklet and saying the prayers and meditations. Each Station is a new source of daily meditation, and the Passion of Christ becomes a regular meditation for you in the future.

After discussing all of this, I have concluded that the desert here is a state of being, more than a physical place. The desert is that soul in the state of sanctifying grace desiring to achieve greater sanctity by seeking God's Holy Will. Remember Our Lord's words during His last private meditation in the Garden of Gethsemane: "Father, if this cup cannot pass away unless I drink it, Thy Will be done." How do you find out God's Will? It is the same place where you will intimately find God. St. Augustine says that to find God, we must look within our very souls with all sincerity. If you are in the state of sanctifying grace, you will find Christ residing there, waiting to help you achieve that level of sanctity for which He called you. Resolve this Lent to do more for the love of God by entering deeper into the desert of your soul, a soul desirous of solitude.

*\*This article originally appeared in The Seraph in March 2022.*

## *Prayer for Choosing a State of Life*

*O My God, Thou Who are the God of wisdom and good counsel, Thou Who readest in my heart a sincere desire to please Thee alone and to direct myself in regard to my choice of a state of life, in conformity with Thy Holy Will in all things; by the intercession of the most holy Virgin, my Mother, and of my Patron Saints, grant me the grace to know that state of life which I ought to choose, and to embrace it when known, in order that thus I may seek Thy glory and increase it, work out my own salvation and deserve the heavenly reward which Thou hast promised to those who do Thy Holy Will. Amen.*



# I AM THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

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*Robert Richards (The Johnny Rebel Catholic)*

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I dedicate my very first article to Jesus Christ, Our Lady, and the angels and saints for bringing me home to the Church after my “Great March to Rome” over several years on my own, but not completely alone. Claiming English and German heritage, I am the first and the only Catholic, the only true Christian, in my family (As far as I know.) since the Revolt in England and Germany, for I was a Protestant (Assemblies of God and the Southern Baptists). However, I lived like a pagan and an agnostic.

I left Protestantism in 2019 and fell into the “belly of the beast” of the Novus Ordo down in Louisiana, but then I left Louisiana in 2022. Though I did not know it at the time, I was on an adventure to find the Holy Roman Catholic Church. It took several years, but I went through the “Recognize and Resist” position, passing through the FSSP and ICKSP, and then the SSPX, before declaring Sede Vacante in March of 2024. Then I found a sort of detour through the CMRI and other “Traditionalists,” where I was baptized and confirmed.

It was in February of last year that I found the Franciscans of the Strict Observance in Lubbock, Texas, and the Church in exile into the wilderness, completely cut off, with just Bishop Butler and Bishop Madrigal. After going through and reading many years of articles of *The Seraph*, and hearing the stories of Archbishop Ngo Dinh Thuc, Bishop Louis Vezelis, Bishop Giles Butler, Bishop Luis Madrigal, and others, I have taken the liberty to be a little creative and to think things through in the modern world, where creativity and thinking are highly frowned upon.

Because I was graciously baptized on the Feast Day of St. Dominic in August of 2024, and though I am generally reserved and introverted, I “bark” what is not worth “barking” and to light the world on fire (*St. Luke 12:49*) as a “Hound of the Lord” with the torch of the light of truth as an honorary and adopted son of St. Dominic. The Dominican Order has three mottos: “*Veritas*” (Truth), “*Contemplare et contemplate aliis tradere*” (To contemplate

and to hand on to others the fruits of contemplation), and “*Laudare, benedicere, Praedicare*” (To praise, to bless, to preach). The Order of Preachers, established by St. Dominic, is a far and distant memory for the Church, and the Dominicans were sadly all but wiped out by the Modernists. Still, I desire to keep the memory of St. Dominic and the “Hounds of the Lord” alive, however I can, even to the present day.

To address the rather dire and sinister situation of the Great Apostasy, it is in counterattacking that I attack with the noble standard of truth, like St. Joan of Arc, and though I own minimal experience of the lowly private from the war in the trenches, I obtained many experiences of the gallant colonel. It is going on the defensive that I am going on the offensive. I intend to be that old cannon on which Christ the King and the Queen of the Angels provide the spark and to fire off shots, as G.K. Chesterton once said, “*I must avenge Our Lady on her vile slanderer. Now or never.*” It is not that we are doing that “same old, same old,” but rather, that “same old, same old” is no longer “just peachy.” In doing, as Bishop Giles Butler often repeats, “*Whatever you do, do for the love of God,*” and I would even proclaim to the critical and the proud and state, “*Whatever you do, do for*

*the love of the Immaculate.*” (Something to remember during this Lent) To the bottom of all of this, I strongly suggest that we should “mosey around and go down yonder” by staying on top of it all.

What is wrong on the banks of old Christendom? There are just as many, if not more, heads as there are opinions, and it can be stated that there are as many false opinions out there as there are false religions. Anyone in our time can identify as a “Catholic” or “Christian” just as Mary Sue can identify as a vacuum cleaner. Our Lady appeared to St. Bernadette at Lourdes in 1858, declaring, “*I am the Immaculate Conception.*” Pope St. Pius V, a Dominican pope, instituted the Feast of the Immaculate Conception in 1568 and even condemned all the errors attacking it. However, in 1854, Pope Pius IX proclaimed the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary a dogma of faith. The United States of America had, sometime before, proclaimed Our Lady in her Immaculate Conception as its Patroness, after Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Interestingly, St. Bernadette was once asked what she feared most, and, to the great pleasure of everyone, she said, “*I only fear bad Catholics.*” The cause, simply put, of the “Great Apostasy,” which I argue began to

rear its ugly head at the Protestant Revolt and not at the Second Vatican Council or even during the French Revolution, is this: the warnings of Our Lady at Quito, La Salette, Lourdes, and Fatima largely was dismissed and even often ridiculed and mocked by the very children of God and the Blessed Mother. One would think that the Great Apostasy, marching onward in all its might yet in very little but subtle steps, would wake people up in Christendom. The fact of the matter is, very few Catholics (Not to be confused with the good Catholics striving for truth) are either not spiritually aware of the war going on or, even more sadly, they do not care. Those born into the Catholic faith who should know better do not know any better as they fall into the "Modern Spirit of the Revolution." The spiritual rotteness, the moral and ethical depravity of men, but especially Catholics, causes an intellectual corruption and bankruptcy. Common sense becomes extremely uncommon, and the sins of wicked men, grasping heresies and paganism, make the Catholic indifferent, apathetic, and cowardly. I dare to state in such strong language that the firstborn children of Satan who are the pagans and the heretics (Bad and apostate Catholics, too) and the aristocracy and nobility of hell fan-

ning the demonic flames of sins, blasphemies, and hatred at the Blessed Virgin Mary and her Immaculate Heart, are only growing stronger through the denial of her Immaculate Conception, her perpetual virginity, and her Divine Motherhood as the Mother of God and mankind; the worst hatred comes from those who dare to sow in the hearts of children indifference, contempt, and hatred towards the Blessed Virgin Mary, and finally, there are the wicked men who publicly hate and insult her holy images, but especially her Most Holy Rosary.

What really yanks my chain is not so much the Talmudists, the Freemasons, the Protestants, and the Modernists taking shots at the Immaculate. Still, it pains me so much more that whenever she needs her children the most, we are spiritually and doctrinally unwilling to defend her. To make matters worse, Jesus Christ hangs crucified and wounded on the Holy Cross at Calvary. This comes from the prophet who says, *"And they shall say to Him: What are these wounds in the midst of Thy hands? And he shall say: With these I was wounded in the house of them that loved me."* (Zacharias 13:6) To add more insult to injury, the Blessed Mother, ever so sorrowful, is left weeping bitterly before Christ crucified

all by herself, lamenting: “I gaze upon the children of men to see whether anyone feels any compassion for me, and I only see but a few! Do not forget me; consider how much I have suffered.” I am dead certain that Jesus Christ would sharply rebuke Catholics today, “Woe to all ye bad dogs! The world is full of ravenous wolves, and you are dumb dogs who do not bark louder than the wolves howling! (Isaias 56:10) May I ask what we are so afraid of that we keep silent and do nothing, and meanwhile, the hatred for the Immaculate Mary is at its highest peak? “What is wrong,” says G.K. Chesterton, “Is that we do not ask what is right.” (What’s Wrong with the World, Chapter I)

Our Lady loves the unlovable, understands the misunderstood, accepts the rejected, respects the disrespected, appreciates the unappreciated, regards the disregarded, accompanies the isolated and exiled, sustains the humble and, feeds the hungry, comforts the afflicted, enriches the poor, strengthens the weak and the crippled, lifts the slandered and calumniated, gives hope to the hopeless, pardons the unpardonable, rescues the abandoned, and remembers the forgotten, for the Church applies this to her in the Proverbs. (Proverbs 8:17-36), “I love them that love me: and they

*that in the morning early watch for me, shall find me. With me are riches and glory, glorious riches and justice. For my fruit is better than gold and the precious stone, and my blossoms than choice silver. I walk in the way of justice, in the midst of the paths of judgment, That I may enrich them that love me, and may fill their treasures. The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His ways, before He made anything from the beginning. I was set up from eternity, and of old before the earth was made. The depths were not as yet, and I was already conceived. Neither had the fountains of waters as yet sprung out: The mountains with their huge bulk had not as yet been established: before the hills I was brought forth: He had not yet made the earth, nor the rivers, nor the poles of the world. When He prepared the heavens, I was present: when with a certain law and compass He enclosed the depths: When He established the sky above, and poised the fountains of waters: When He compassed the sea with its bounds, and set a law to the waters that they should not pass their limits: when He balanced the foundations of the earth; I was with Him forming all things: and was delighted every day, playing before Him at all times; Playing in the world: and my delights were to be with the children of men.*

*Now therefore, ye children, hear me: Blessed are they that keep my ways. Hear instruction and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, and that watcheth daily at my gates, and waiteth at the posts of my doors. He that shall find me, shall find life, and shall have salvation from the Lord: But he that shall sin against me, shall hurt his own soul. All that hate me love death.”*

Each of us, as Catholics and individual human beings, is still old enough to be wise and to strive for more wonder, yet ever so young enough to wonder for more wisdom. It is one thing to act like a child; it is quite another to become a little child, for the Sacred Scriptures often speak spiritually of the widows and orphans, the needy and the poor, the little ones and the little children, and the sick and helpless. It can be illustrated as the little child eagerly leaping onto the lap of the Mother of God and pleading, “*Mamma, would you please read to me one of the stories of Our Lord in the Old Testament or even the New Testament,*” or “*Mamma, would you please tell us more about your life and also about the lives of my brothers and sisters before me, the saints?*”

The Immaculate loves to be

found hidden, and where she is hidden, she is very much loved to be found. God does not dearly love the Blessed Mother because she was created Immaculate; the Blessed Mother was created Immaculate because God dearly loves her. Do not listen to the critics, or rather the proud “peacocks,” and never fear loving the Blessed Virgin Mary too much; nobody can love her as much as God loves her. Love is the refuge and comfort of the mantle of the Blessed Lady. She is the way to salvation and to God through her Immaculate Heart, for she is the Ark of the Covenant (*Numbers 10:35-36, Psalm 131:8*), covered in the golden veil and holding the manna, the priestly rod of Aaron, and the Ten Commandments. The Immaculate Mother carried and held God – the same Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, the Priesthood of Christ, and the Word of God Incarnate (*Hebrews 9:4*). G.K. Chesterton writes of her, “*Our Lady, reminding us especially of God Incarnate, does in some degree gather up and embody all those elements of the heart and higher instincts, which are legitimate shortcuts to the love of God.*”

The most beautiful paradox of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Immaculate Mother, is that she gives birth and also adopts her children as her own. She puts

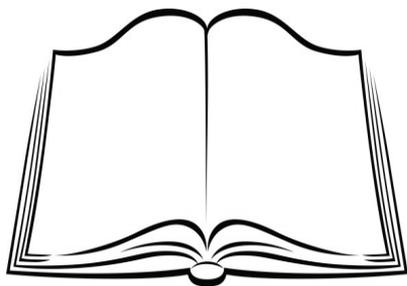
the abandoned, mistreated, and neglected little puppy thrown to the wolves into her arms, presses it to her Immaculate Heart, kisses it, sweetly and affectionately reinforces that little orphaned child in her maternal mantle as she did at both Guadalupe and Fatima, *“I see you, my love. Are you suffering a great deal? Do not lose heart. I will never forsake you, and I suffer always with you. Listen, put it into your heart, my youngest and dearest son, that the thing that disturbs you, the thing that afflicts you, is nothing. Do not let your countenance, your heart, be disturbed. Am I not here, I, who am your Mother? Are you not under my shadow and protection? Am I not the source of your joy? Are you not in the hollow of my mantle, in the crossing of my arms? Do you need anything more? Let nothing else worry or disturb you. I am truly your compassionate Mother: your Mother and the Mother to all who dwell in this land and to all other nations and peoples who love me and call on me and entreat me. My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge, your comfort, your salvation, and the way that will lead you to God. I love you, my dearly beloved little son.”*

It is better to be found in the mantle of the Mother of God and lost in the deep ocean of

her Immaculate Heart than to be completely lost in the shallow waters of the world and be found too comfortable with the toxic fumes from the smoke of paganism and heresies of the Devil and the most vile sins of the flesh that cry out to heaven for vengeance. I am that little puppy, or the orphan, the outcast, the wildcard, and even the maverick of the flock, and that little puppy grew up ever so fast into the “guard dog” of Our Lady, barking at the very wolves that the little puppy was thrown to as the Great Apostasy had a firm grip on family and me. I miraculously escaped, though I should not be alive. I left my family and friends behind, striving for truth as one of the few “Johnny Reb Catholics” left in the South, all at the age of twenty-eight, locking blades with pagans, heretics, apostates, and schismatics of just about every kind, as I shall discuss in my next article.



# *Just Stories*



*Winfried Herbst, SDS*

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## ***LENDING TO THE LORD***

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I was just thinking of how good it is to lend to the Lord, to give a little of the little that we may have, or much of the much, in response to the many appeals for charitable assistance that come knocking at the door of our hearts. What made me so thoughtful is something which St. Luke says in his holy Gospel. That something is this encouraging verse, "Give, and it shall be given to you; good measure and pressed down and shaken together and running over shall they give into your bosom. For with the same measure that you shall mete withal, it shall be measured to you again."

And now all kinds of stories come to my mind. I

remember how, long, long ago a poor beggar called on a certain holy bishop and asked him for an alms – in the name of Jesus. "I was a prosperous merchant," he said, "but I have barely escaped with my life. And now if you send me away empty I must surely starve."

What did the bishop do? He knew that it is more blessed to give than to receive. So he called his servant and said, "Give this good man five pieces of silver." With tears of gratitude and a promise of prayer the happy beggar hastened away.

But only a few days afterward he came again with the same humble plea; for he could find no work; and again the good bishop sent

him away happy with a gift of money. Nor did he scold him and make him feel bad before he gave the gift; such is not the charity of Christ. “God loveth a cheerful giver.”

And when he came a third time the holy bishop’s heart was just as generous as before. But when he asked the servant to give the beggar some more silver coins, the former replied, “But, Your Lordship, the purse is empty; at your request I have given everything in alms to the poor.”

Then that generous lender to the Lord was troubled because he had nothing more to give. How could he send the poor man away to let him suffer and maybe die? He could not! ‘Is there nothing at all in the house, nothing of value that we might give him!’ he asked the servant.

“Nothing, Your Lordship, except the silver plate on which your mother serves your vegetables at meals.”

“Ah!”, said the bishop, his face brightening, “bring it at once and give it to this needy

man. That is how the saints teach us to give and give and give again. In their hearts, you see, they ever hear the music of the words of Christ, “As long as you did it to Me.”

That silver dish gave the poor man a new start in life. He found work. He became wealthy again. Then he came back to the charitable bishop and returned a thousand-fold all that he had received. With that money the bishop was able to help hundreds of other poor people again. What a heavenly circle of goodness!

Do you know what someone told me? He said he thought that poor man was the Savior in disguise, in the form of an unfortunate merchant. And do you know what I said? I said, “Why, of course! That’s absolutely true, and you do not have to tell me. Don’t you remember the Savior’s beautiful words in the Gospel of St. Matthew?” Then I took my Bible, that holy, precious book which we should love to read to him, “Then shall the King say to them that shall be on His right hand: ‘Come, ye blessed of My

Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me to eat; I was thirsty, and you have Me to drink; I was a stranger, and you took Me in; naked, and you covered Me; sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.' Then shall the just answer Him, saying: 'Lord, when did

we see Thee hungry and fed Thee; thirsty, and gave Thee to drink? And when did we see Thee a stranger, and took Thee in? Or naked, and covered Thee? Or when did we see Thee sick or in prison, and come to Thee?' And the King answering, shall say to them: 'Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, *you did it to Me.*'



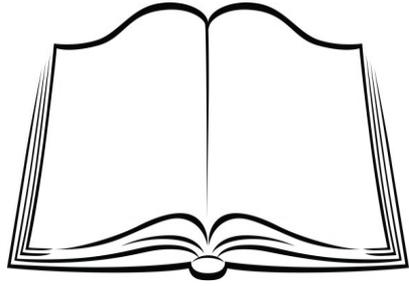
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# *The Catholic Mother to Her Children*



*The Countess de Flavigny*

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## ***TWENTY-SIXTH LESSON*** ***OUR LORD'S TEARS OVER JERUSALEM***

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Our Lord, on His last entrance into Jerusalem before He suffered, willed to enter the city in triumph. Perhaps it was to encourage His disciples, who were so shortly afterwards to see Him in the hands of His enemies; perhaps it was to show how little we ought to reckon on the esteem or favor of men, who will cry *Hosanna*, “the Lord preserve you!” one day, and “Crucify Him, crucify Him!” the next. But, amid, the shouts of the multitude, who spread their garments on His path, and cut down branches from the trees, to strew them as a tribute of honor, when He came in sight of Jerusalem, He wept. The tender Heart of God-man, Emmanuel, was moved with compassion and sorrow over the city. And why? “If thou also hadst

known” – this was His voice of lamentation – “If thou also hadst know, and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace! But now they are hidden from thine eyes.” Then he foretold the horror and distress of the siege of Jerusalem by the Roman Emperor, and its destruction at last, so that one stone should not be left upon another, because of the blindness, and hardness of heart, and impenitence, of its children. All this was to come, “because,” He said, “thou hast not known the time of thy visitation.”

Now, this is for our instruction. Jerusalem represents a soul in sin; and, what is worse, unconscious of its sin; sinning on, without remorse, sinning as a habit, growing

less pricked by conscience as time goes by, and its sins are repeated. This state is described by the Apostle as "having the conscience seared;" that is, burnt as with a hot iron, which is painful at the time, but leaves the flesh hard and insensible. Such a soul neither sorrows for its past offences, nor for its present condition, nor fears for its impending doom. It is like the prophet, Jonas, who in the midst of the storm which his own disobedience had raised, was fast asleep in the ship's hold. He needs a special call of grace to cry to him, as the ship's captain cried in the ear of Jonas: "Why art thou fast asleep? Rise up; call upon thy God!" This fatal peace is the most perilous condition. Travelers in the snow, if they yield to the slumber that creeps over them from the cold, if they lie down, are frozen to death. They have to be up, and keep moving; they must take some vigorous steps homewards. And the impulse to do this, is what Our Lord speaks of as their "time of visitation." There are special times of grace, like a higher tide than usual, that floats off the boat stranded on the beach, and makes it swim again. Our Lord speaks with all His

sweetness and persuasion by the pen of St. John, His beloved disciple, the very Apostle of Divine Love. "Behold, I stand at the gate, and knock. If any man shall hear My voice, and open to Me the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." But the man within, the sinner we are speaking of, must rise up and open the door; that is plain. Otherwise, Our Lord passes by, and the day of visitation also passes away. He goes to some other door, perhaps to the very next door; to someone who will listen to His voice, and open to Him, and be saved.

How solemn and stirring are these truths! A sinner may be forgetting his sins, till he is with the very jaws of Hell. He wakes up suddenly, as the blast of a trumpet. He then summons the priest to his side; what sort of confession shall we suppose him to make? That long-hardened heart; is it likely to melt with, true contrition, or even to be touched with true attrition, the less perfect kind of sorrow? Can it do this, at a moment's notice? By a special mercy, it may; but there must often be

cause to fear for such a case, that it is a mere natural dread of torments that drives it to the Sacrament. At all events the time of *our* visitation is now. “Behold, now is the acceptable time: behold, now is the day of salvation;” this is the Church’s voice, borrowed from the Apostle. One of the causes of Our Blessed Lord’s agony in the garden, when He shed, not tears, but the dreadful sweat of Blood, was to see the multitudes who would insist on losing their

undying souls, in spite of all He was come to suffer for them. Let us not be among the number. Let us know “the time of our visitation.” What is there about us, what in our lives, that would make us most anxious, if the summons were now to come? Today is ours; tomorrow may be out of our grasp. We may be in eternity; or the grace we have delayed to accept, may have passed to some other. Let us awake, and dream no longer.



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# FRANCISCAN SAINTS

**FEBRUARY 17<sup>TH</sup>**

*Blessed Luke Belludi  
Confessor, First Order*

When St. Anthony in his apostolic zeal was occupied in reforming the inhabitants of Padua, a young man presented himself to him and humbly begged for the habit of the Friars Minor. This was in the year 1220.

Luke Belludi — such was the name of the young aspirant — belonging to one of the noblest families of Padua, had received a brilliant education. Far from imitating the usual conduct of his fellow students at the university, he kept to himself and employed his leisure hours in useful and holy occupations. St. Anthony, who had discovered Luke to possess a pure and humble soul, joined with a well cultivated and talented mind, gladly recommended him to St. Francis, who received him personally into the order.

St. Anthony chose Friar Luke as his companion in the nu-

merous missions which he gave from that time until 1231 at Padua, Rimini, and elsewhere. Luke made wonderful progress in religious perfection under the skillful direction of St. Anthony, whose apostolic labors he continued after the death of the latter.

Padua had at this time fallen into the power of the truculent Ezzelino. Events of the year 1239 filled up the measure of her misfortunes. Many of her nobles were condemned to death, the mayor and his counsellors were banished, and Luke Belludi, the guardian of the Friars Minor, was expelled from the city. Ezzelino gave the government of the city to his nephew Encelino, a man as wicked as he himself. The tyrant, irritated against the unhappy city by reason of her long and heroic resistance, ruled her with

a rod of iron. This unwarranted conduct was fatal to the university. Padua, formerly so flourishing, rapidly declined; and the beautiful church dedicated to St. Anthony, which had been begun toward the close of the preceding administration, was left unfinished.

Friar Luke, however, had secretly re-entered the city, and remained in careful hiding in the convent of St. Mary. After the night office he and the new guardian frequently spent some time in prayer at St. Anthony's tomb, begging him to come to the assistance of the good city of Padua. One evening as these two holy persons were praying in the chapel dedicated to the saint, a voice suddenly issued from the tomb, assuring them that their prayer was heard, that the city was shortly to be delivered from its tyrannical master. The prediction was verified on June nineteenth.

Because of his great prudence, Luke was elected provincial minister, and as such founded many convents of his order. He was also instrumental in furthering the completion of the basilica of St. Anthony. God granted him the gift of miracles and confirmed his sanctity in this life.

When death visited him in 1287, his body was laid to rest in the same church in which St. Anthony reposes, and was placed in the same marble sarcophagus in which the remains of the great saint were once enclosed.

The veneration accorded to Blessed Luke from the time of his death has continually increased, and Pope Pius XI added his name to the list of the beatified.

#### ON THE EFFECTS OF THE TRUE LOVE OF GOD

1. The love of God is active in the interests of God. St. Ignatius says that true love of God can be distinguished from false love of God in that it is active; if it does not act, then it is not true love. This love of God produced such powerful effects in Blessed Luke that he sacrificed to God the glory of a great name and the honors and joys which he could lawfully have enjoyed. Such sacrifices are not required of all of us. We should manifest our love of God by keeping His commandments. "If you love me, keep my commandments" (*John 14:15*). — Can you lay claim to such love of God?

2. The love of God causes us to do everything out of love for God. Our Savior says: "Where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also" (*Matth. 6:21*). The fervor of our love must have its source in our heart. Blessed Luke was imbued with but one idea, to be entirely devoted to the service of God and to accomplish his duties from the motive of pure love of God. — Can you say in truth, All for the love of God?

3. To the love of God is attached a great reward. It ennobles the lowliest deeds and

makes them meritorious for eternity. It procures for us the remission of our sins, for Christ said of the sinful woman: "Many sins are forgiven her because she hath loved much" (*Luke 7:47*). Finally, there is reserved "the crown of life which God hath promised to them that love him" (*James 1:12*). — Strive, therefore, to acquire true love of God and pray earnestly that it may be vouchsafed to you.



### ***PRAYER OF THE CHURCH***

O GOD, WHO HAST PREPARED INVISIBLE GIFTS FOR THEM THAT LOVE THEE, POUR FORTH INTO OUR HEARTS THE SPIRIT OF THY LOVE, THAT WE MAY LOVE THEE IN ALL THINGS AND ABOVE ALL THINGS, AND MAY BECOME PARTAKERS OF THY PROMISES WHICH SURPASS ALL OUR DESIRES.  
THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD. AMEN.

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